



STATE OF IDAHO

March 20, 2008

The Honorable Lawrence Denney
Speaker of the House
Idaho House of Representatives
Legislative Annex
Boise, ID 83720

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Dear Mr. Speaker,

I have the honor to inform you that I have approved and am transmitting herewith the following bill to wit:

H608

EXCEPT THAT said bill making appropriations of money embracing distinct items has been item vetoed and disapproved within the time limited by law, the bill having been received in the Office of the Governor at the hour of 11:40 a.m. on March 20, 2008. The item disapproved is as follows:

On page 1 of the enrolled bill, lines 25-31, the sum of "\$14,368,800"

There is no question that we need an effective, community-based substance abuse treatment system in Idaho. There also should be no question that I support providing adequate public resources for treatment. However, the item vetoed in this bill goes far beyond the scope of what state policy makers had in mind when our treatment program was created or what Idaho taxpayers should be expected to accept.

The federal grant that originally put the state on this path was accepted on the premise that the state's financial responsibility for the treatment program would total \$7 million a year at the conclusion of the three-year grant cycle. This legislation provides more than twice that much money without having had the time or opportunity to develop full and reliable data on the benefit of the existing investment.

It has been my consistent position that such investments must be justified over time by results. It is no more than fiscally responsible and prudent to limit funding to the level of the original federal grant until clear data are available and the program's benefits and shortcomings can be accurately assessed.

Speaker Denney

March 20, 2008

Page 2

What's more, the federal grant was designed as a tool to develop "access to care" and provide an incentive for building community resources to provide services to those in need. Despite these good intentions, the program has become an unfunded mandate providing state funds to directly provide treatment. The community resources have not been built.

Perhaps most troubling, there are serious questions about how some of the federal grant funding was used – questions about the potential misuse of funds for patients' health needs beyond treatment. Those questions alone cast doubt on the wisdom or propriety of committing state taxpayer dollars to so dramatically expanding the program.

In addition, the vetoed lines include spending authority for a new federal grant that poses problems of its own. While the program would be 100-percent federally funded in FY 2009, that federal commitment would be phased out over a few years and state taxpayers would be fully responsible for funding the program. It is yet another camel's nose under the tent – however well intentioned – and could reasonably be expected to expand in scope and expense if the initial two locations in the pilot project are successful.

Finally, let me point out that the lines vetoed in this bill do not impact the existing state funding for drug treatment.

As Always – Idaho, "Esto Perpetua"

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C.L. Butch Otter". The signature is stylized with a large, looping "C" and "L" at the beginning, and a more fluid, cursive "Butch Otter" following.

C.L. "Butch" Otter
Governor of Idaho